

OUTLINE OF THE CONVALESCENT RELIEF WORK, AT BELLEVUE HOSPITAL, NEW YORK CITY

By MARY E. WADLEY

Nurse in Charge of Convalescent Relief Work.

THE initial year of this Social Service or Convalescent Relief work in Bellevue Hospital was completed the first of July. During that time one thousand four hundred and fifty-three patients were brought to the attention of the visiting nurse for assistance. The assistance rendered is of wide range dependent wholly upon the necessities of the patients which may arise from destitution, protracted convalescence, the fact that they have neither home, relatives nor near friends, or from urgent need of employment. Sometimes it is merely to put them in communication with distant friends; again it may be only advice which is needed. Very often it is to secure admission to homes for incurables, soldiers' homes, or similar institutions. These patients have been reached by visits to the wards and by the reports of doctors, nurses and others. The spirit of coöperation shown by the entire hospital force has been a great stimulus to the workers. Lay visitors also have come forward and have contributed largely of time and personal effort. One of these volunteers gives a part of Sunday afternoon, his only leisure time, to visiting patients who have been transferred to the Island, a list of those to whom this transfer has seemed an especial hardship being furnished him every Saturday. His visit is designed to make them feel that they have not been forgotten by the rest of the world.

The largest part of the work has been in the line of securing admission to convalescent homes, of which we have several supported by private charity near New York.. They have been most hospitable to Bellevue patients. Those unfamiliar with this phase of the work can form no idea as to what a few weeks of rest with abundant food and country air means to these patients, who would otherwise take up the burden of life in a weakened condition, which would be very sure to lead to another complete break-down or worse still to chronic ill health. An equally important branch is the summer work of getting the convalescent babies and children to the seashore or country. Educational home work in this connection is recognized as important, but for lack of workers it has received but little attention as yet.

One of the most interesting features is the assistance which the hospital Convalescent Relief Work affords country boys who come to the

city friendless and almost penniless to earn small wages. When sickness overtakes them in their little hall bedrooms, their means are soon exhausted, and they must come to the hospital. On the day of discharge, friendless, facing the world without a penny, and without employment, unless a helping hand is extended, scarcely any source is open to them but dish-washing or waiting in a low grade restaurant or saloon. This employment they can always obtain without references and it provides them with food from the outset, but brings them into dangerous companionship, and the scanty wage may preclude for a long time the possibility of getting enough ahead to enable them to seek higher employment. Here comes in the need of a fund from which can be loaned to trustworthy men and boys enough to take care of them if a good position offers until their own first pay day, and thus obviate the need of their engaging in occupations such as the above. Indeed none of this relief work could have been successfully carried on without the aid of the small private fund contributed by a few interested friends. Such material aid is given only to discharged patients, and depends wholly upon the urgency of the need. The great majority of those assisted are earnest, hardworking people. From the humanitarian point of view they compare well as to their deserts with their more fortunate brothers and sisters in other conditions of life.

Taken altogether, the discouragements in the work have been very few. The manifestation of friendly interest as well as the tangible aid given seems in many cases to form an incentive to a better life and helps to a general moral as well as physical uplifting, although of course the time has been short for a just appreciation of results. The variety of the service is almost too great to enumerate, for nothing is considered foreign to it that will relieve mental anxiety, and thus promote recovery. The need of such service has so long been apparent to all hospital workers that one can only wonder it has never been undertaken before.



COUNTRY OUTINGS FOR CHILDREN

MRS. JOHANNA VON WAGNER of the department of health in Yonkers, N. Y., who was one of the founders of Prospect House Settlement there, has interested friends to provide funds for sending children for country outings. A large party goes weekly to an old farm house near Yorktown Heights.